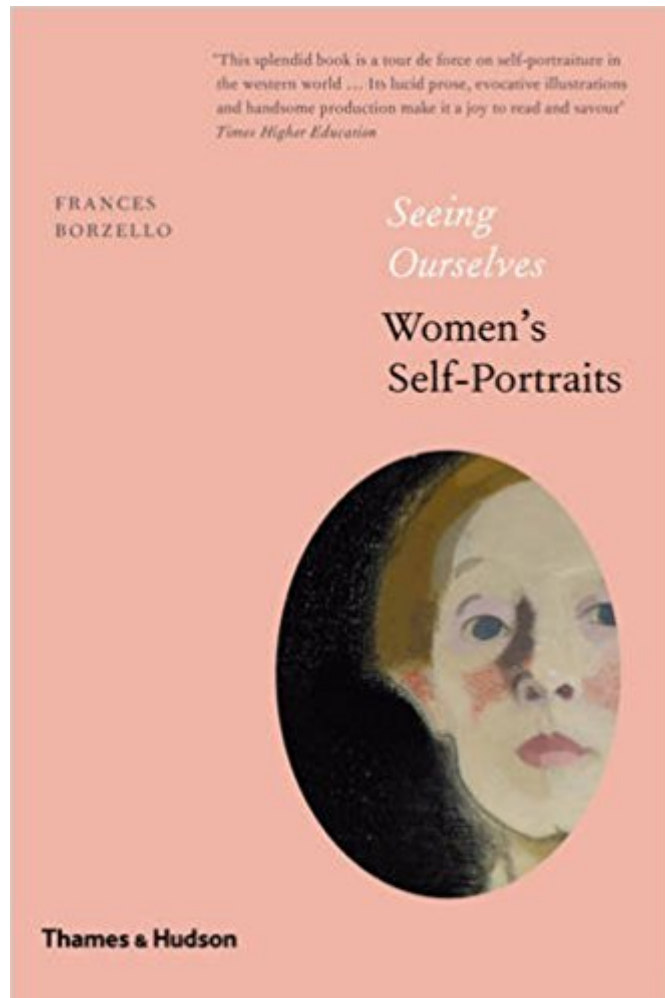




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Seeing Ourselves: Women's Self-Portraits



Synopsis

The first chronicle of the whole story of female self portraiture through the centuries—a key work in the study of women's art For centuries, women's self-portraiture was a highly overlooked genre. Beginning with the self-portraits of nuns in medieval illuminated manuscripts, *Seeing Ourselves* finally gives this richly diverse range of artists and portraits, spanning centuries, the critical analysis they deserve. In sixteenth-century Italy, Sofonisba Anguissola paints one of the longest series of self-portraits, from adolescence to old age. In seventeenth-century Holland, Judith Leyster shows herself at the easel as a relaxed, self-assured professional. In the eighteenth century, from Elisabeth Vig e-Lebrun to Angelica Kauffman, artists express both passion for their craft and the idea of femininity; and the nineteenth century sees the art schools open their doors to women and a new and resonant self-confidence for a host of talented female artists, such as Berthe Morisot. The modern period demolishes taboos: Alice Neel painting herself nude at eighty years old, Frida Kahlo rendering physical pain on the canvas, Cindy Sherman exploring identity, and Marlene Dumas dispensing with all boundaries. Frances Borzello's spirited text, now fully revised, and the intensity of the accompanying self-portraits are set off to full advantage in this new edition, now in reading-book format. 180 illustrations, 130 in color

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Customer Reviews

In her fifth book, social art historian Borzello has "tried to make sense of what I was seeing by treating the self-portraits as painted versions of autobiography." Borzello has chosen vivid self-portraits of women from middle ages to the present that reveal cultural characteristics of an era

as well as ideographic inclusions of the artist's perception of herself. As in every autobiographical sketch, imagery is selective. Thus many portraits of earlier centuries are modeled on those of male painters, palette on one arm, brush poised in the other, both indicating serious intent. But despite this earlier evidence of fine self portraiture, it was not until the late 19th century that art began to be recognized as a legitimate and significant field for women. Borzello's text, accompanied by the 240 well-chosen illustrations (100 in color) is a history of the marked separation of male/female domains in daily life, as well as women's ability to skirt prevailing male traditions and portray an inner life that transcended domesticity. The transition from subtle details—the setting the portraitist chose for herself, the style of dress and hair, the placement of her hands—to the startling freedom of 20th-century imagery that revealed women artists as "independent and unshackled by conventional notions of feminine behavior" is arresting. The visual manifestation of how women see and represent themselves may seem elusive, but Borzello does a fine job of illuminating the subject, without overly simplifying it. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Books of this high caliber are few and far between in feminist art history. Borzello, a specialist in the social history of art, aimed to "present women artists' self-portraits as a genre in its own right." She succeeds admirably, creating a work that is exciting yet factual, inspiring without indulging in hyperbole, and that stands as one of the finest single volumes on women artists appearing in at least a decade. Written in elegant prose that will draw in even casual readers, it bears a wealth of new material on both well-known and practically unknown artists, with 240 illustrations—100 of them in large format and excellent color. After the preface and introduction, there are separate chapters covering the 16th through 20th centuries, with headings that range from "the presentation of self" to "breaking taboos," and comments called "drawing breath." For example, of the late 1960s Borzello writes, "These were the glory days of feminist art, when indignation fueled the artists and everything seemed possible." To demonstrate, she discusses Louise Bourgeois's "Torso/Self Portrait," c.1963-64, and Sylvia Sleigh's "Philip Golub Reclining," 1971. A landmark work; essential for all academic and large public libraries. Mary Hamel-Schwulst, Towson Univ., MD Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A very interesting and provocative book on a very neglected topic. It's an eye opener. You might not agree with the author, but you certainly will view self portraits, especially by women artists differently and longer.

The content of the book is highly recommended and I don't have much to add to the other positive reviews. My only complaint is that the book jacket is made from soft paper which gets dirty very easily. My copy had smudge marks when I received it, probably due to rubbing against the unpadded shipping box. If you want a clean copy, maybe you should buy one from a bookstore.

Great compendium of should be famous women painters.

For anyone interested in this topic, I recommend this book. It is well-written and offers lots of insight on the role of female portraiture in the western artistic tradition.

good read

Lushly illustrated, fresh perspective.

This book about women artists seen by themselves is very useful for Art History education. But it's also very interesting for everybody wanting to know more about women artists and Art HERstory. I've read the book in its Dutch translation "kijken naar onszelf". For all those who can understand Dutch: het is een zeer interessant boek, waarin de auteur de geschiedenis van de vrouwelijke kunstenaars behandelt vanuit de zelfportretten die deze vrouwen van zichzelf hebben gemaakt. Daarbij plaatst zij de vrouwen in de sociaal-maatschappelijke context waarin zij leefden en dat geeft een goed beeld van de situatie. Het toont ook de moeilijkheden die vrouwelijke kunstenaars door de eeuwen heen hebben moeten overwinnen om te kunnen bestaan in de kunstwereld die een mannenwereld was/is. Het boek behandelt de vrouwen vanaf de renaissance tot eind 20e eeuw.

An outstanding gift for all those interested in women's history and art. Lavishly illustrated, this book provides a fascinating text which raises provocative questions about how and why women artists chose to represent themselves in the way they did. This is a particularly useful contribution to both women's studies and art history." I enjoyed it thoroughly.

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